



U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire

Pennsylvania's Fourth Congressional District

Testimony before the House Budget Committee
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(As prepared)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the fiscal year 2013 budget resolution.

The passage of last summer's Budget Control Act sent a strong, bipartisan message to the country that we are serious about reducing our deficit and making the tough decisions to get our country back on a sustainable fiscal path. It also demonstrated that we can make responsible spending decisions without harming the benefits our veterans and seniors have earned.

I'm sure almost everybody in this Congress would agree that Social Security, Medicare, and veterans' benefit programs represent an ironclad agreement between citizens and the federal government. A promise that can never be broken.

I am also certain that we would all agree that the biggest long-term threat to those programs may be inaction in addressing our nation's fiscal mess. Unless we take meaningful steps toward reducing our deficit and long-term debt, and eventually to balancing the federal budget, the threat of crowding out available funding for Social Security, Medicare and veterans programs will get even more real.

Indeed, the best way to protect those earned benefit programs is to make sure we right the ship and get our federal budget back on a fiscally sustainable course. Putting our nation on course towards a balanced budget would serve to protect the critical programs that our veterans and seniors rely on and were promised.

Reducing our budget deficit will require real sacrifices but in doing so these programs must be protected to ensure that we honor the promise we made to our veterans and our seniors.

As you work to draft the fiscal year 2013 budget resolution, I would ask the committee to protect those earned benefit programs – Social Security, Medicare and veterans benefits – programs that Americans have earned through a lifetime of hard work and sacrifice.

Any savings accrued from reform of these programs must be used solely to strengthen those programs for our current and future beneficiaries – not to pay for other programs or for any other

purpose. Simply put, veterans and seniors are not the cause of our deficits, so we should not look to them to solve our current crisis.

It is my hope that this committee will produce a bipartisan budget proposal that makes the hard choices and moves our nation's budget towards balance in a manageable timeframe. I stand ready to work with the committee to this end, and truly appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.